

The LAY-MONK.

*Animam sic semper eandem
Esse, sed in variis doceo migrare Figuras.* Ovid.

FRIDAY, November 20. 1713.

IT has been a common Observation, That few Men have sequester'd themselves from the World, but such as were no longer fit to live in it. The Reader will judge by the Characters I have given in my last Paper, whether or no this is our Case. Our little College of *Lay-Monks* is made up of Gentlemen: We are all Lovers of Ease and Freedom, hearty Friends to each other, and Enemies to the Spleen. It is plain by our letting up this Correspondence with the World, that we do not intend to pass our Lives in a lazy Indolence, nor in a Contempt of whatever is transacted without the Walls of our Convent. In short, we are like a Set of Acquaintance, who having met by Chance in some publick Garden, have chose to themselves a By-Walk, where they may at once enjoy the Pleasures of the Place with Privacy, and have a distant Prospect of the rest of the Com-

times a Beggar. It might now triumph in a beautiful Woman, and afterwards sport in a Squirrel, or talk in a Parrot. Sometimes it hunted the Woods in a Lyon, then wing'd the Air in a Bird, or inhabited the Rivers in a Swan; and after all this Circulation of Being it might return to animate a human Frame, as before. It was necessary to confirm this surprizing Doctrine by some Example, for which the Philosopher produc'd himself; and tho' he cou'd not recollect that he had ever been a Brute, he plainly remember'd he had exist'd at different Times in several very considerable Men. His Soul, as he affirm'd, was first in *Aethalides*, then in *Euphorbus*, afterwards in *Hermonitus*, then in *Pyrrhus*, and then in *Pythagoras*; and by a particular Gift of the God Mercury, it was enabled to remember all its *Transmigrations*, and whatever it had act'd or suffer'd in each of these Forms successively.

To return to my self: My Reader may perhaps after this Discourse suspect, that I am going to set up for the Reversion of the Soul of *Pythagoras*, and to pretend that I have got it into my Possession. But I shall not have the Vanity to make my self so considerable. I have, indeed, often figur'd in my Imagination such a Vagrant as I have here describ'd, and amus'd my self with thinking what an Entertainment he wou'd be to his Friends, if he publish'd his Itinerary, and cou'd draw together all that Variety of Ideas which must have pass'd thro' his Mind in such a Train of successive Beings. There is something in that Diversity of Fortune, Employments, and Scenes of Life thro' which I have pass'd, which seems to bear some distant Resemblance of this; for which Reason, my Friends, and particularly the Gentlemen of the Society that know my Story, have given me the Name of the PYTHAGOREAN.

I was determin'd to reserve the Account of my Biography for another Opportunity; tho' I must immediately begin my Story as high as *Pythagoras*, a Philosopher already mention'd by Sir EUSTACE LOCKER, and in great Esteem with our Society. There are few who have not heard of that learned Ancient, and of his peculiar Notion of the *Transmigration of Souls*. According to that renown'd Sage, the Soul of Man was a kind of wandring Spirit, which at its Separation from the Body, pass'd immediately into some other Body, either of a Man, or of any other Animal; and thus was capable, in a Course of Time, of travelling successively thro' as great a Variety of Forms, as Matter is seen to do in the Furnace of a Chymist. You were therefore to imagine it sometimes exerting the Wisdom and Follies of a Man, and sometimes the Instincts of a Brute; now animating a Prince, and at other

I was educated at the University, where I pass'd some Years of my Youth with the utmost Satisfaction: The Tranquillity of the Place pleas'd me, and the Love of Books, which I found growing upon me there, was sooth'd by the many beautiful Passages I met with in the Writings of Poets and Philosophers, who, perhaps, are somewhat partial in the Praise of a Contemplative Life: But I was awaken'd out of these amusing Dreams, by a Letter which summon'd me up to Town, on the Death of a Relation, who, together with a very handsome Legacy,

had left me the Hopes of an Employment he had for some Years enjoy'd at Court, and for which, foreseeing his own Death, he had used his Endeavours that I might succeed him.

This threw me into a very different Scheme of Life, from what I had mark'd out to my self before: I began now to feel the Gaiety of Youth; I dress'd well, shook off the Rust of the Scholar, learn'd the Exercises of a Gentleman, and went into the most fashionable Company; my Heart was full of Vanity, and rais'd with sanguine Hopes and Expectations; I often pity'd my Fellow-Students, whom I had left poring on Books at the University: You are to imagine me now familiar in the Apartments at Court, frequenting Levees and Drawing-Rooms, dining sometimes with the Gentlemen of the *Green-Cloth*, or the Grooms of the *Bed-Chamber*; and at other Times, spending my Money in the Company of *Place-Mong'rs*, and *Undertakers* for great Mens Favours. It is impossible to express how much I was surpriz'd with this new World of Civility; what a Pleasure it was to observe how many Friends I was surrounded with; what handsome Reasons were given me every Day, why my Affair did not proceed; and in short, how ready (tho' I never carry'd my Point) every one I apply'd to was to be my humble Servant.

Here I am to acquaint my Reader with an Incident of my Life, I cannot reflect upon without a sensible Disorder. *Bellamira!* I never before saw such bewitching Eyes! I well remember how she look'd on me the first Time I spoke to her, with what an agreeable Manner she accepted my Hand to help her thro' the Crowd, and how she smiled at my Zeal, which made me, unknowingly affront her Sister, for pressing after her too closely! I shou'd have said, it was at a Birth-night at Court; this was my first Acquaintance with her: I grew from that Moment a passionate Lover of this Lady, who, as I afterwards found, was Mistress of no inconsiderable Fortune, and wholly at her own Disposal: She receiv'd my Addresses with a Kind of Sympathy which encreas'd my Passion. Love animated me into a Poet, and I courted her in Verse, but with the same Fate, tho' not with the same Genius, that *Waller* courted his *Sacharissa*: In short, I cou'd never gain any Thing more of her than her Heart; she was just ready to put me into the Possession of my Wishes, when she suddenly made a Pause; she was scrupulous whether she ought to follow her own Inclinations, and thought it less Trouble to resign her self to the Conduct of a She-Friend, who very prudently married her to a Man with whom she might live in a perfect Indifference, and be wholly at Liberty to the Enjoyments of Show and Equipage, with which she seem'd to be chiefly delighted.

This sudden Disappointment was the Source of many Adventures that befel me in the following Course of my Life: I had now lost both my Pretensions at Court, and to my Mistress: It may well be believ'd I was affected with both very sensibly: At first, I fell into a profound Melancholy, which was afterwards succeeded by as extravagant a Gaiety; I grew lavish in my Expences, laugh'd at Marriage, wore fantastical Dresses; and some other peculiar Symptoms breaking out upon

me, my Friends took a proper Opportunity, and convey'd me into the House of a skilful Physician, where I employ'd about a Twelve-Month in writing Satyrs on the Sex, and fixing them up on my Chamber Walls, 'till the Humour having spent it self this Way, I was once more thought fit to be trusted with my Liberty.

I was now qualified for a Fit of Knight-Errantry; and from a Life of Confinement, I immediately started into that of a Wanderer: A War was then on foot between the *Emperor* and the *Turks*; I hasten'd to the Scene of Action, put my self a Volunteer under the gallant Duke of *Lorain*, and was present at the memorable Siege of *Buda*. I shall not stay to acquaint my Reader with the particular Time and Occasion of my leaving the Army, but only tell him that when I laid down the Soldier, I took up the Traveller: This new Course of Life was extreamly pleasant; I pass'd thro' Variety of Countries, often changing my Habit, for the greater Opportunity of making Discoveries, and asking every odd Fellow I met with in my way, Whether he had not been in Love?

Some Years after the *Revolution*, I return'd to my Native Country, which by this Time was grown a new Scene to me: My Court-Accquaintance were all vanish'd; and finding my self out of Fashion, and my Friends either dead or dispair'd, I resolv'd to take the Opportunity, and keep my self unknown, except to a few, with whom I enjoy'd all the Pleasures of private Conversation: I have seen enough of the World, and have therefore determin'd to pass the Remainder of my Days in an agreeable Obscurity, and in the Studies of Learning and Morality, in which I was first intit. Yet that I might still indulge the Varieties of my Life, I have very often mingled in Company, without discovering my self: I am a Stranger to the *Theaters*, tho' the Box-keepers never knew my Name; and I have sometimes drop'd in at *Button's* Coffee-House in an Evening, and gone away again with much Satisfaction: the Supposition that no body has thought worth enquiring after: The general No which I hear is entertain'd of me in Places w I have been seen, is, That I am a *Chymist*, that I study privately; and some will have it, I am an Adept in the *Rosicrucian* Philosophy.

The Reader will see by this short Sketch, a Variety of Circumstances I have run thro' for what Reason it is that my few familiar Friends have humouroufly named me the PYTHAGAN; He may consider me, if he pleases, at different Stations of Life, as a *Scholar*, a *Courtier*, a *Poet*, a *Lunatick*, a *Soldier*, a *Traveller*, and *Monk*. Tho' I am not super-annuated, I at arriv'd at that sedate Part of Life, which tastes least Pleasure, yet enjoys most Repose: I look upon all the Ideas which I have laid into my Mind in this Multiplicity of Fortunes, as so many Flowers laid before a Hive, and am now endeavouring to work them up into Honey.

This Paper will come out every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and may be had at Mr. Harrison's by the Royal Exchange; Mrs. Dodd's and Mrs. Boulter's without Temple-Bar; and Mrs. Bond's at Charing Cross.



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